

fencing) going straight for the trees therein and tearing the bark with their claws vertically downwards. The open-air enclosure has been so constructed as to correspond as much as possible to the natural habitats of the wild animals, with numerous trees at different stages of growth with an undergrowth of bushy shrubs and guinea grass, rockeries, caves and a watershed. The trees include *Eugenia javanica*, *Mangifera indica*, *Trewia nudiflora*, *Peltophorum ferrugineum*, *Swietenia macrophylla* and *S. mahogani*, all of which have the claw marks in abundance on them. The topmost mark on any tree is just over 8 feet from ground level. Unfortunately there is no Arian (*Terminalia arjuna*). There is however a Rubber tree (*Castilloa elastica*) which is, but for one or two stray marks, invariably left alone. Plantain trees (*Musa* sp.) have been torn off and destroyed by these animals.

It might be mentioned in this connection that unlike lions, cats, or dogs, which have a habit of scratching the ground with their claws, the tigers seldom have been observed to make use of the ground for sharpening or cleaning claws. Tree-climbing among tigers might be individual peculiarities, for, even though many of the trees mentioned above have branches within easy reach below the 8 ft. height reached by the claws, none of them have been seen perched on any of the branches.

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS,

TRIVANDRUM.

E. S. SIMON.

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### III.—WILD DOGS ATTACKING A TIGER.

(Story told to me by Barkiya, shikari, and his brother and confirmed by the Range Officer.)

Soon after sunrise I spotted vultures circling in the distance, so my brother and I set off to investigate.

After half an hour's brisk walking we arrived at Kapra Nala which at this point is about 30 feet wide and except for a small water hole, quite dry. The nala for the greater part of its course runs between very steep banks, but just here it opens out and its bed is level with the banks. On the opposite side of the nala and about 50 yards from it rise two hills about 200 to 300 feet high separated from each other by a very narrow ravine, full of long green grass and shaded by large trees—an ideal spot for a tiger to lie up after a hearty meal.

At the edge of the water hole we found traces of a recent tragedy—disturbed soil and blood stains. It was easy to read the story—a tiger had crouched in a patch of long grass and pounced on an unsuspecting sambhur when it came for a drink. Very cautiously, we followed the trail made by the tiger dragging the animal and eventually located the body in a clump of bamboo at the mouth of the ravine.

In the meantime the vultures had collected, but instead of settling round the carcass they alighted on the trees, an indication that the tiger was nearby.

My brother and I were arguing whether we should go back to the village and collect a few men to scare off the tiger so that we could collect what meat was left, when he drew my attention to a movement in the long grass half way up the hill on the right. We watched carefully and saw something red. My brother whispered to me *bakri* (barking deer), but I told him to be quiet and then we saw another and another and still another, until on that hill alone we counted 12. It then dawned to me that they were not *bakri* but wild dogs, and we decided that we better withdraw. To our horror we found a dog stationed alongside the path we had come by and then discovered that we were surrounded. We immediately climbed up a large fig tree and sat very quiet. We had never heard of wild dogs attacking men before, but we knew that if they treed any animal they would surround it for several days until hunger or weakness caused the animal to leave its shelter and then of course its fate was sealed.

From up the tree we had a very clear view of what happened. The dogs were stationed about 30 yards apart along both hills facing the ravine, as well as on the farther side of the nala. Altogether we counted 22 dogs. The strangest part about their behaviour was their absolute silence and when one moved, all moved, gradually closing in.

Suddenly with a snarl a tiger appeared and the dogs closed in still further until there was a ring of them round him, about 40-50 feet in diameter. They were apparently driving him into the bed of the nala where he could get no cover, but where their paws could get a firm footing, with no obstructions such as twigs or scrub. This was very evident from their action. When the tiger faced the way they wanted him to go, the line of dogs withdrew but closed in behind, but when he faced the opposite way, they stood up to him, bunching together and making stiff-legged rushes of a few feet.

The dogs however left a large *mahowa* tree out of their calculation, for when the tiger saw it he made for it with a rush scattering the dogs in his way. He gained the shelter of the tree and sat down with his back firmly against it and his tail curled round over his fore-paws. The dogs closed in round the tree until the nearest was within 10 feet; the majority crouched on their haunches with heads between fore-feet as if content to play a waiting-game. There were three or four half-grown pups which frisked round playing with each other.

For the first half hour the tiger sat quietly merely snarling occasionally, but then he began to lose his temper and gave vent to a couple of full-chested roars; but its only effect on the dogs was to make a few of them prick their ears.

The tiger then fell to lashing his tail, but one of the pups slipped round to the back of the tree and gave it a painful tweak. This brought the tiger round with a roar, he let loose with a 'hay-maker', the pup threw itself on its back, paws in the air, slipped between the tiger's legs and got away uncratched. This move left the tiger's flank and rear uncovered, and a full-grown dog leaped in from the left and snapped at the tiger's neck, just behind the ear,

It was slow in its get-away with the result that it received a blow on the ribs which hurled it 10 feet away, stone dead.

The tiger sat down again, but presently the blood from the bite in its neck started to trickle down his chest. This made him very uncomfortable and when he could no longer endure it he lowered his head to lick the blood off. This momentary inattention cost him dear, as the instant his eyes were off them than the whole pack rushed in and a few hectic seconds followed; the tiger was completely hidden under a mass of snapping struggling dogs, they fastened on to him everywhere biting and tearing. It is impossible to give an accurate description of the struggle as all the eye could see was a seething mound of red, with glimpses of yellow and black. The dogs suddenly withdrew leaving five of their number dead or seriously injured. The tiger had fared very badly—one eye was closed, the corner of his mouth torn away, his ears in tatters and numerous gashes all over his body. The most serious injury seemed to be to his right fore-paw as he was unable to place it on the ground.

The dogs reformed their circle, but this time much closer; and whereas at first they waited for the tiger to make the first move they now started making tentative rushes and kept the tiger on the alert. This continued for nearly an hour and due to loss of blood the tiger was fast losing strength. Again the dogs rushed in and there was another confused struggle. When the dogs drew off this time the tiger was in very bad shape and it was with a great effort that he kept himself erect. Presently his head began to droop and again the dogs attacked, one fastened on to the tiger's throat and although immediately beaten to a pulp, its jaws remained locked and its hold could not be broken. In a supreme effort the tiger reared up on its hind legs with the dead dog still at its throat and others draped all over. Even with this glimpse we could clearly see that he had been disembowelled; he toppled over backwards and was immediately covered with dogs, there were a few more convulsive struggles and all was still.

At this stage my brother and I slipped down from the tree and went back to the village. We told our story and collected a crowd and returned to the scene of the fight. By the time we got there the dogs had gone, leaving the vultures in possession. All that was left of the tiger was bones, sinews and a few tufts of blood stained fur. We counted twelve dead dogs and could see where others had dragged themselves away.

A few years ago when there was a reward paid for wild dogs they were so rare that we did not see their foot-print for several years. Now the reward has been abolished and they have multiplied to such an extent that hardly a week goes by without our district being raided.

J. CONNELL & Co.,

FRERE ROAD, BOMBAY.

W. CONNELL.

October 15, 1943.